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THEORY OF AGENCY.

OR,

AN ESSAY

ON THE

Nature, Source and Extent

OF

MORAL FREEDOM.

IN TWO PARTS.

WITH

Occasional Observations and Reflections.

BY A WELL-WISHER TO MANKIND.

Where there is Reason, there is Liberty.
CICERO in quest. Tusc.

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PREFACE.

THE consideration of the subject of Liberty has been, not only an agreeable amusement to the Author, but really interesting; he having formerly been carried away by the metaphysical, and very specious reasonings of the Necessitarians, into a favourable opinion of their notion.

What gave him lately an occasion of considering the matter, was, the reading an Essay entitled PRINCIPLES OF MORALITY, *written, as it seems, to establish the doctrine of Fatalism. In that piece, the author represents the strong sense, or feeling, as he calls it, of Liberty, so universal in mankind, as a deceitful idea. That in want of power to confer liberty, the Divinity was oblig'd to impress our minds with this fallacious perception, to dispose us to perform the part assigned us. This was too striking to pass without attention: It had the effect; and but for this, the Author of the following pages haa probably remain'd quiet, and secure, in the Necessitarian tenets. In examining the matter, he put down his thoughts in writing, as they occur'd*

curr'd ; not indeed as any anſwer to that piece, but for his own information, and in the moſt impartial manner he was capable of ; if poſſible to find on which ſide of the queſtion the truth lay. In this way he became aſſured of the reality of Liberty, particularly by a diſcovery of what it conſiſted in, and how it originated in the operations of the mind. This is what he has in the following pages endeavour'd to explain. Upon the whole, he thinks a Theory of Liberty practicable, and accordingly leaves the conſideration of it, together with the materials he has collected, to the candor of the publick: Not without a pleaſing hope that ſome better hand may undertake and perfect the idea.

THEORY OF AGENCY, &c.

CONSIDERING the design'd brevity of the following Essay, any particular examination of what others have written upon the subject, may not be expected: neither that much notice should be taken of the terms they have used, to express their meanings and explain the thing. A few words concerning absolute liberty, and moral freedom, may suffice to introduce the Author's private way of thinking.

BY absolute liberty, a person has been supposed capable of determining differently, all circumstances remaining the same. Coactive necessity is its reverse; and both equally destructive of true liberty: One being absolute will, without any reason for action; the other being acted from without, as a mere machine.

ON both sides of the question, it has been firmly believed, that some degree of a self-determining power was necessary to the existence of liberty; on neither side, however, has any one been able to find it; and probably many may have become Fatalists for no other reason,

reaſon, than becauſe they could not conceive of Liberty without it.

By Moral Freedom, has been meant a power of determining according to apprehended good and evil; oppoſed to a ſtate of moral neceſſity, either natural, or induced by long cuſtom, habit, paſſion, or ſome ſpecial depravity; which may be further taken notice of in the ſequel: For the preſent, we may obſerve, that the queſtion of Liberty turns upon this, viz.

Whether there be any moral power or faculty in the mind, whereby it can occaſionally change a prior determination? Wherein this conſiſts? and by what operation of the mind effected?

Preparatory to a ſolution of this queſtion, we may conſider ſome of the differences between the rational and the ſenſitive world; together with the nature of what is called the will.

The powers of all creatures are ſuited to their wants and intentions; and their liberty is of the ſame nature, and proper to their powers. The brute, with only ſenſitive powers, and what are called inſtincts, acts according to theſe, and without conſtraint; or as he liſts; but cannot have moral freedom; this being the excluſive property of the rational nature. Man has the inherent power of controul ng the animal affections, which is denominated moral. So that he is not, as may by

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and by appear, in all things neceſſitated. I ſay in all, becauſe in many things he is ſo; thus by the conſtitution of his nature, as a corporeal being; in what life conſiſts; and in ſome appetites, deſires and averſions; but wholly ſo, till arrived to the uſe of reaſon, as in childhood, and at any time of life when reaſon fails; or the ſubject criminally neglects the proper uſe of it.

ALL appearances evidence that man was form'd for ſelf-direction; ſince by his intellectual powers he can govern the ſenſitive ones in the uſe of proper means; rectify errors in judgment; diſengage himſelf from prejudices; foreſee events, and conduct accordingly: All which, by conſideration; not by any thing of an abſolute intention; the appearances of which are deceitful. The ſame may be ſaid of the choice of two exactly ſimilar objects, wherein there is no preference. I mention this, becauſe the pitching upon one, inſtead of the other, has been objected as a proof of free-will: Tho' the perſon takes one inſtead of the other, only to get rid of the difficulty, which is all the motive he has in the caſe.

BUT ſuppoſe a perſon could chuſe without a motive, (i. e.) with abſolute liberty, what would be the wiſdom of ſuch a power? To what purpoſe an unmeaning determination more likely to produce ill than good effects? It is time

time enough for willing and determination, when ſome cauſe, ſome reaſon for it appears.

THE notion of abſolute liberty leads us to enquire into the nature of what is call'd the Will: A thing which, as it ſeems, has not been rightly underſtood by the writers in morals. Much has been ſaid of it in the affair of liberty; ſome have imagined it the firſt mover in the mind; and long uſe has aſſociated a notion of ſomething arbitrary in the mental œconomy, which has occaſioned great confuſion and obſcurity.

THE common expreſſion is, that man has a Will; his faults are charg'd on the Will; and his Liberty called Freedom of the Will. Now in theſe expreſſions, we have ſtrange intimations of ſome certain ſubſiſtence, faculty, or diſtinct power in the mind, by which it chuſes and refuſes, wills and nills, as the terms have been, and which have, as it were, given a ſanction to the notion, and prejudiced people againſt an examination of the thing; whereas by a little obſervation of what paſſes in their own minds, almoſt any one might perceive the miſtake.

BY looking inwards with reſpect to will, nothing appears but deſire and averſion; and by theſe, we conſtantly obſerve the mind determined; and by no other means. By theſe, we ~~perceive~~ purſue apprehended good, and avoid evil; our determination wills, or choices, which are ſynonimous,

* ſynonimous, are as our deſires and averſions; and theſe, as our perceptions, and the ideas we have of things; or as our external and internal ſenſes are affected. By all which it is evident, that will is no other than the mind determined by motive.

THESE affections of the mind, determining to action and conduct, are what have been invariably expreſs'd by the term will. And indeed a proper name was neceſſary, as well as convenient, to prevent tedious and irkſome deſcriptions of the complex idea. The fault has been, that in the name, we have loſt the true nature of the thing; we have inſenſibly taken that for a cauſe, which was only an effect. Thus much may ſuffice in a preliminary way. We come now to the enquiry what our Liberty is, and how it originates.

THE great Mr. Lock placed it in ſuſpenſion of the mind, (i. e.) as I ſuppoſe, a being duly diſpoſed to determine as evidence ſhould appear. Suſpenſion implies impartiality, and a freedom from byas and prejudice; but it does not ſolve the difficulty of motive; ſo that none have receiv'd any real information from

 it.

* Will and choice may indeed be diſtinguiſhed, but the difference does not effect our preſent ſubject. Will properly reſpects action; Choice the manner and references of it. Or otherwiſe; Will determines a thing ſhall be done; Choice the manner how, or by what agent; this or another. Or converſely, Choice determines to the greater apparent good; Will to act accordingly; but in general there is ſuch a ſameneſs, that to ſay we may change our motives, is to ſay we may change our Wills or Choices.

it. But it appears that the author himſelf was not ſatisfy'd of the exiſtence of Liberty; for in a letter to his friend Molineux, he owns that he could not conceive of Liberty being compatible to the omniſcience of the Deity. This no doubt was from a notion of ſomething abſolute being neceſſary to the idea of Liberty; the univerſal miſtake of all the writers in the controverſy, on one ſide as well as on the other, while the thing is ſo far otherwiſe, that the mind is evidently paſſive in every thing it gives attention to, at leaſt it is ſo in a ſtate of vigilance, ſince the ſpirit here ſtrictly obſerves the laws of its union with the body, though it may be otherwiſe in ſleep. And probably from this effect of the laws of union, the Neceſſitarians have been induced to reſt their cauſe on the power of motive, and latterly have perſuaded themſelves that this alone is an effectual bar to liberty.

If, ſay they, we do nothing without a motive, we cannot by any means have liberty. And they add, that a moral determination no more admits of freedom, than a natural or phyſical one; in which they plainly make no diſtinction between the ſenſitive, and the rational nature. Nor do they better, when they would confirm their doctrine of Fatality, by the ſophiſtical whim of motive depending on motive, *in infinitum*, (i. e.) that there is no firſt mover:

mover: A notion too puerile to admit of a grave anſwer, were it not that many ſober writers have adopted it, as if it was really to their purpoſe. But ſo it is, that in attempting a ſyſtem of abſurdities, one muſt give an anſwer to ſuch ſtuff as this, as well as the reſt; therefore *quo ineptiæ trahunt, retrahuntque ſequamur.*

THIS notion of a boundleſs ſeries of motives, muſt have been the offſpring of contracted views, as well as the impoſſibility of tracing them back to a firſt mover, viz. the external ſenſes in their firſt affecting the mind; before this, it is to be obſerved there could be no motive. What chiefly gave occaſion to the whim, ſeems to have been the impoſſibility of tracing them back to their ſource. The caſe is ſuch, that long before we are capable of looking back, our firſt perceptions in childhood have eſcaped us. The memory of childhood is not retentive. In infancy the perceptions are ſeldom retain'd to the next day; tho' in a ſhort time they may remain two or three riſings and ſettings of the ſun; but were it otherwiſe, in the courſe of a few years our faculties paſs through ſuch a variety of action, aſſociations, improvements, and interweavements of ideas; and too often ſuch actual depravities of our moral powers, that the hundredth part of theſe may be well thought more than enough to prevent our purſuing the thread of motive back to its original. BUT

BUT there is yet a way by which we may ſatisfy ourſeves ; and that is, by beginning at the firſt perceptions of the human mind : What theſe are, we may be aſſured by conſidering our frame ; the order of our ideas ; and what muſt, in the nature of things, have been our firſt perceptions : And indeed the impoſſibility of their having been any other than what originated in external ſenſe. The firſt of theſe ſenſes in uſe, are feeling and taſting ; we feel firſt, then taſte, loath, or elſe ſuffer hunger. Our uſe of the other ſenſes appear to follow, but no mental ones are perceptible, 'till the bodily ones have been exerciſed. Anger is the firſt of the paſſions, and grief known by ſhedding tears, (i. e. weeping); for in the firſt days, the child cries without tears. After ſome experience, imagination begins ; and in length of time reaſon, and the moral ſenſe unfold. All theſe, in their uſes, ſupply a vaſt number of images, ideas, and correſpondent motives, forming a wilderneſs effectually preventive of any other way of inquiry ; while in this it will evidently appear, that our firſt motives originated in external ſenſe. For we have no innate ideas ; nor have we the leaſt appearance of mental powers, before perception by our ſenſes. We muſt have perception before we can have motive ; and ſenſation before we can have perception : So that here is the beginning of all motive. Motive then is not ſuch an infinite

thing

thing as the Neceſſitarians would have us believe ; they make it like ſpace, unbounded ; for which this was once deify'd : As for the ſame reaſon, according to them, motive might be too.

By the way, I have taken for granted that others have the ſame idea of motive that I have, (i. e.) any perception exciting to action ; or determining the judgments we make of things. It may be conſidered of two kinds, natural and moral ; the former immediately from our various ſenſes ; the latter the offspring of our underſtandings, in reaſoning ; on which account I take the liberty of diſtinguiſhing them by the terms primary and ſecondary.

At the firſt view, man appears conſtituted of two natures, the animal and the intellectual. Motive neceſſitates all mere animals without a remedy ; and it does the ſame by every human creature ; as far as he is governed by his animal affections, ſo far he is neceſſitated. But experience ſhows he can controul theſe. Socrates and others in all ages have done ſo, by conſidering things, and their circumſtances ; and further by diſciplines and uſe, facilitating the capacity, and improving the habit of reflection. We can conſider the bodily claims, and ſubmit to, or reject them.

In conſidering the power of Motive, I readily grant the Neceſſitarians all the facts they build upon ; but not the aſſumed principles,

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and hypotheſis. I own we are in all things determined by Motive; that we never act without, and never contrary to the preſent one. Theſe conceſſions no ways interfere with our Liberties. What this conſiſts in, is a particular prior to ſecondary Motives. Our Liberty conſiſts in the procuring this ſort of Motive. By conſideration we determine concerning the propriety of our Motives, and confirm or reject them, in lieu of ſuch as we approve: (i. e.) We reject the primary ones occaſionally, and adopt others, which I call ſecondary, as more eligible: In the ſame manner as a ſervant who has leave for it, upon conſideration of two perſons, chuſes which ſhall be his maſter.

In fact, we find our Motives do often change, and why? but by ſeeing things in different lights. It is true that they frequently change, as it were, by chance; but this is far from being always the caſe. New Ideas, and of conſequence, new Motives ariſe in a way of reaſoning and reflection; and this difference of origination alters the quality of the Motives, with reſpect to Liberty; in the latter caſe, we are active in their production: It is in this way we controul our inferior affections, according to the natural order, that the nobler powers ſhould rule the ignobler. The thing is, that upon examination, finding the reaſons for ~~intended~~ action, conduct, judgment or opinion faulty, a change

change of Motive naturally enſues, for other, or contrary ones. Any one may recollect that he has often done ſo, and ſatisfy himſelf that he can on like occaſions, do the ſame again; viz. as reaſons occur in reflection.

HERE the Neceſſitarians may probably aſk, Where ſhall we find the Motives for conſideration? ſince they hold it not at our command.

THE queſtion indeed is proper to the occaſion; but in putting it, they virtually own a fault they have always been reprehenſible for, viz. a negligence in their enquiries into the frame of the human mind, and the operations of it; or they might have anſwer'd this queſtion by themſelves.

WE freely grant that we have no immediate power of commanding conſideration: But we have an equivalent, for all human purpoſes, implanted in the mind; a naturally ſtrong diſpoſition to it, which nothing but culpable ſelf neglects, and rejections of its uſe, deſtroy: So that we have only to ſubmit to our native promptings, to its uſe, on all occaſions; and we ſhall ſufficiently conſider. Where there is reaſon, conſideration and reflection conſtantly and readily offer. A much wiſer proviſion for us, than any abſolute power of commanding it; we can let the diſpoſition take place; or we can ſhut the eyes of the mind againſt it; we can uſe or refuſe it as free creatures.

We may with an agreeable propriety, call conſideration the eye of the mind; ſince we make diſcoveries by it. And in comparing it with the bodily organ of ſight, we may find we have a like power over both. The bodily eye is automatically, and naturally kept open by a proper muſcle for that purpoſe; while yet we have a voluntary power of ſhutting it by another prepar'd for that office. The power of conſideration is as really, and as much under our command, in its deſign'd uſe, as the bodily eye is to view, or not, any external object. And we are in the general as much promted to the uſe of it, with this advantage, beſides others, that the new motives obtain'd by the uſe of it, are our own property; redound to our praiſe and benefit; as the neglect of it does to our guilt and injury.

But the Neceſſitarians object, that deſires and averſions are not in our power, and therefore we have no Liberty.

The reader will eaſily perceive the ſameneſs of theſe and Motive, in ſo many reſpects, that the ſame anſwer might have ſerved for both: But as particular expreſſions and ſounds have very great influence on ſome minds; and conſidering that a ſeparate diſcuſſion may give occaſion to the mentioning ſome things which more or leſs affect the argument, I was determined to give it a place by itſelf.

IT is then readily own'd, that deſires and averſions are not immediately at our command, as has been obſerv'd of Motive ; but we have a remote power of obtaining new ones, or altering them, which is ſufficient for our purpoſe. Experience teaches that we can procure very different, and even contrary ones, by induſtry and application of mind.

THE body and the mind are both improveable ; and by improving their faculties, likings and diſlikings, are generated : Cuſtom and uſe have great influence in altering our likings and diſlikings : ſo applications of mind in the uſe of the underſtandings, as in arts and ſciences, we become delighted with them in proportion as we increaſe in underſtanding them : The mind is like the palate, to which many things by uſe become agreeable which before were irkſome, as oyl, olives, tobacco, &c.

OBSERVATION and attention make ſome things agreeable, by giving us right notions of them ; thus we ſee the ruſtic, who at firſt deſpis'd the gentle manner and obliging behavior of the well-bred and polite, eſteeming them incompatible with a manly fortitude and reſolution, upon further acquaintance, becoming delighted with them.

WOULD we rectify our taſtes concerning buildings, ſculpture, paintings, &c. we may do it by frequent obſervations on them ; and thus alter our erroneous likings and averſions. And

it is the ſame with our moral likings and averſions, which we rectify, or change, by obtaining better notions of the things themſelves, with their tendencies and benefits.

By conſideration we become reconciled to various diſagreeable ſelf-denials; as with reſpect to the means for recovery from ſickneſs; for the preſervation of life and health: For theſe we deny ourſelves many, otherwiſe deſireable gratifications; the contrary becoming deſirable by reflection.

Here I cannot paſs ſome notice of what happened in the hot weather, while I was reviſing theſe pages for the preſs; particularly the death of divers by drinking freely cold water, or other cold ſmall liquors, to quench thirſt, when they were overheated by the ſun, or exerciſe; now although accounts of ſuch accidents are well known to every one, yet they are not attended to for want of conſideration, and a reſolution to conſider and to take their drink leiſurely, and by mouthfuls, at intervals, ſwallowing it ſlowly, 'till cool enough to make free with it. One would think the paſt and ſtriking inſtances of mortality, by indulging in ſuch circumſtances, ſhould render every one attentive and conſiderate; whereas we ſee them ſoon forgot; and why? but becauſe no aſtoniſhing ſound like thunder attends them. Altho' for one that dies by lightnight, there are many that die by ſuch inconſideration. The leaſt thought

thought might prevent many of theſe accidents. If no more than this remark is remembered, of this eſſay, I ſhall think all the reſt, which gave occaſion to it, well rewarded; and have the ſatisfaction of having been uſeful to the world.

BUT to proceed,—

I HAVE obſerved elſewhere, that we can conſider, or we can reject conſideration; and that in both theſe we have liberty; altho' by the latter, in the uſe of liberty, we act againſt the continuance of it, ſo as gradually to loſe the capacity for it, by depravities which always take place in the neglect of it. Both the learned, and the unlearned, are faulty in conſideration. In their inquiries, they have too many reſting places; they are too apt to take up with the firſt appearances of truth, by which they frequently come ſhort of it. On a curſory view, we ſhould be at a loſs to ſay which of theſe claſſes of men are moſt faulty. We have therefore to conſider, that among the learned, as among the vulgar, there are the knowing, and the unknowing. That man, alone, is knowing, who has not only acquired a proper ſtock of ideas, but well digeſted his notions of things. Not the mere ſcholars, that have ſcamper'd through the fields of ſcience for the vanity of a title, and univerſity diploma, without any becoming improvement of mind, or ſubſtantial principles of knowledge; theſe are generally more diſpoſed to avoid conſidera-

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tion, than the illiterate; thoſe they deſpiſe under the term of the *prophanum vulgus*. They have more important and injurious prejudices, with an additional obſtinacy, and arrogant aſſurance, from the pride of vain and imaginary knowledge. The plain, the ſimple, and honeſtly well-meaning, are, if I may be allowed the expreſſion, infinitely more free, than thoſe whoſe ſelf-affections are exalted by a mere formal education. Practical knowledge only is valuable; literature is but a mean for obtaining it, but often falls ſhort of the end. Right knowledge is a moral principle, which, beſides other things, qualifies for ſelf-government, and ſo the enlargement of moral liberty; as literature without it tends to its deſtruction: We ſee the pride of literature and contempt of the ſenſe of mankind in a *Bolingbroke*, *Morgan*, *Coventry*, *Hume*, *Wolſton*, and others; who have made the moſt violent attacks upon all religion, both natural and revealed: Theſe however ſuit only the groſſer palates, who can ſwallow abſurdity without any ſeaſoning, beſides a little elegance of language to recommend it; they are therefore much leſs dangerous to religion than another ſort of writers who are little ſuſpected; and of which there is a great number: Theſe in a covert and inſinuating way, with the ſpecious cloak of moral principles, and refined notions of things, are unſuſpectedly poiſoning the minds of the people. Nothing

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ſhows the depravity of mankind more than the zeal with which theſe writers endeavour to root out of the minds of their readers, thoſe principles which have the beſt tendency for the happineſs of mankind. They are prejudiced, and voluntarily continue ſo: They avoid a manly reflection and conſideration, being apprehenſive it would prove an interruption to their love of licence: Their fondneſs for this, has an effect upon them ſimilar to that of the ſerpent's enchantment of ſmall animals, which is ſaid to be done by a bewitching appearance round the ſerpent's head, when his eyes are fixed on the creature; drawing it, by admiration, to ſtill nearer views of the thing, till it is brought within his reach, ſo weaken'd that he becomes an eaſy prey.

It is not pretended that the moſt conſiderate can in all things find truth; but then they will be generally cautious of miſleading others: And yet a ſtrong ruling paſſion may without a ſteady watch, betray them into groſs enormities. Thus ambition and an over-fondneſs for honor, as by high offices in church or ſtate, or the being eſteemed as perſons of ſuperiour talents, knowledge and abilities: Such perſons if not ſufficiently attach'd, and zealous for a particular party, will be apt to liſt on that ſide of a controverſy where their moſt flattering hopes of diſtinction attract them. In this claſs

perhaps

perhaps, we might place the Author of an Eſſay on the *Principles of Morality*. An Author, who had he written in favor of Liberty, with the ſame genius and capacity he has done againſt it, would have done himſelf honor; and ſav'd one, unus'd to the pen, from attempting ſuch an abſtruſe ſubject.

PART

PART II.

Containing a few preſumptive Proofs of Liberty.

THE Author imagined it might not be amiſs to ſubjoin to the foregoing theoretic thoughts, ſome moral probabilities of the reality of our freedom; which perhaps may prove more agreeable to ſome readers than the other more philoſophic treatment. To theſe may be premiſed a few words concerning the ancient Fataliſts, and the general belief of Liberty in the firſt ages.

IT is acknowledged that univerſal conſent is no infallible criterion of truth. And yet it ſeems worth obſerving, that in all ages mankind have been invariable perſuaded of the reality of Liberty; and this aſſurance continued till the Grecian Philoſophers, by their blind way of inquiry, overlook'd and deny'd it: However

However it was ſeveral ages before the doctrine of Neceſſity ſpread farther than themſelves, even to the days of Epicurus. Epicurus erected an academy, and taught it to his diſciples, and theſe propagated it: But what manner of reaſoners he and they were, may be ſeen in Lucretius, who handed down his imaginations to poſterity. After Epicurus, Liberty became more diſputed; but was ſtill believ'd by all that were not more or leſs taught to diſbelieve their ſenſes. Our modern Fataliſts would reduce us to this, by confuſing our minds with their abſtract reaſonings, which if they prove any thing, imply a great deal too much; particularly by the lengths they carry their power of motive. If we would have liberty, in their way of talk, we muſt be void of paſſions, appetites, deſires and averſions; and be capable of willing differently, all circumſtances the ſame. Unleſs our liberty be abſolute, they will not allow it to be liberty. So that according to them, if a man's property is limited, it is no property; if he is confin'd to his own houſe, or parcel of land, he has no liberty within his own walls; if he has not the ſtrength of a giant, he has no ſtrength at all: But beſides this, their notion ends in ridiculous nonſenſe; as that only inanimate things can have liberty: A ſtone then, a ſtock, or the poſts in the ſtreets have it. A man certainly cannot, unleſs he is faſt aſleep, and does not ſo much as dream.

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But enough of this; the particulars here intended follow.

The faculty of reaſon ſtrongly implies Liberty. In the foregoing part, it was conſidered as the faculty in which it inher'd, as it was evidenced in the article of conſideration. Here I take it in a different light, as a proof of its reality.

REASON in man is in lieu of inſtinctive direction. Man has but few inſtincts; and theſe only ſuch as are for purpoſes prior to, or rather out of the province of reaſon; while more had been ſuperfluous for a creature furniſhed with rational powers. Our frame is contriv'd, as every thing through univerſal nature is, with nothing wanting, nothing redundant. And our being endow'd with reaſon and underſtanding, inſtead of more inſtinctive powers, ſhows that we were ordain'd for ſelf-direction, in conducting by the former: And in fact, we find that we determine frequently on action and conduct by conſideration and reflection, without any inſtinctive impulſe, further than ſelf-love, which without the other, is blind in the human ſpecies.

MAN is plainly form'd not only to provide as the ſenſitive hoarding ſpecies do, the neceſſaries of life, but to procure both them and the conveniences of life, to look beyond what ſenſe and inſtinct can direct him, for this and other purpoſes; to take in by his underſtand-

ing large proſpects ; conſider the effects and events of proſecuting excurſions into them ; and determining on the ſuitable conduct for his intentions. His underſtanding is accordingly analagous to a proſpective glaſs, which furniſhes views beyond what the eye unaſſiſted could afford him ; and which he is upon innumerable occaſions, in wiſdom and prudence oblig'd to make uſe of, or ſuffer for the neglect. This glaſs we may uſe, or refuſe in ſupplying the mind with materials for conduct ſo peculiarly needful in the ſyſtem of man, and no other ways provided for him : It is the mean, as before obſerved, by which he can occaſionally change his mere animal motives, and whereby he is denominated free. Upon this occaſion, I may be allowed to repeat, That our being naturally oblig'd to act in conformity to the judgments we procure by conſideration, is no objection to our liberty ; ſince this ariſes only in the conſideration itſelf, which is prior to the judgment. The eſſence of our liberty conſiſting in that uſe of reaſon whereby we can occaſionally turn our preſent determination into another channel.

In the next place the moral ſenſe, or conſcience, ſo univerſally found in our ſpecies, is a ſtrong preſumptive proof of liberty.

Every human creature has a ſenſe of right and wrong, ought and ought not, which are evidently intended to remind him of duty and obligation ;

obligation; and without which he could have no idea of it. It is as really a natural ſenſe, as the external ones of ſight, feeling, taſteing, &c. As conſtitutional as the other internal ones of honor, harmony, benevolence, &c. All which, where any of them are wanting, no induſtry or diſcipline can give the ſubject any idea of their objects, whatever theFataliſts or Moraliſts pretend to the contrary. It is well known that theſe gentlemen aſſert it to be generated by the occaſions, although by by theſe it is only excited into action, upon the appearance of its objects: It unfolds when the perſon is arrived to the uſe of reaſon, and this being its nature, it evidently implies moral laws with a capacity of obeying and refuſing. Here then it is to be obſerv'd, that ſuch a ſenſe could be to no pertinent purpoſe, if we had not liberty. The faculty would otherwiſe ſhew great unkindneſs in the conſtruction of the mind. Is it poſſible to believe that an infinitely wiſe and good Being, would have plac'd ſuch a ſevere chaſtiſer in our frame, were we really neceſſitated? but rather that he would have form'd us ſo as not wrongfully and injuriouſly to afflict ourſelves. We ſhould rather believe that he would have impreſſed mankind with an effectual bias to right conduct, or elſe with proper inſtincts for every laudable purpoſe. vid. Divine moral government next to be conſider'd.

THE appearances of a divine moral government are preſumptive of liberty.

IN the general courſe of common providence a ſcheme of moral government appears. We find that right action and conduct tend to happy enjoyments; as the contrary naturally to evil effects; and this by an eſtabliſhment in the nature of things. So that we are beforehand appriſed of the reſpective general conſequences, in which we find ourſelves intereſted, and naturally accountable: Common providence having thus the nature of law and government.

AS to any ſpecial providence, the Materialiſts would have us believe there is no ſuch thing; but that every event is the effect of general laws without any interpoſitions. They are no ways concerned that obſervation and facts are againſt them, as well as the univerſal ſenſe of the firſt ages. We find the ancients firmly perſuaded of a particular and ſpecial providence, and frequently obſerving that good morals and religious obſervances, engage a kind and indulgent providence on their ſide. That where theſe and religious obſervances have been duly attended to, eſpecially by their rulers, a people have been divinely ſmiled upon by providence; and not only ſo, but many times honoured with riches, power and grandeur; together with the prolonging their duration as a people; and contrariwiſe. This was matter of

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their obſervation, an evidence of what the univerſal Father of his creatures expects in the moral world, viz. That all mankind, of whatever condition, or however circumſtanced, ſhould uſe their intelligent powers in the beſt manner they were capable of; by improving and diſciplining themſelves into virtuous, and approveable conduct; and with the uſe of the beſt religious obſervances they are furniſhed with, or can obtain. A confirmation of which we have in the beginning of St. Paul's Epiſtle to the Romans.

WHAT ſhall we then think of the preſent doctrine of our ſectaries, That materially good deeds are hateful to the Deity, unleſs in a ſtate of grace; and that by every act of obedience, although performed with an honeſt intention to amend our lives, we render ourſelves more abominable in the ſight of God, and are further remov'd from his grace and favour, than by a courſe of licencious living, and total diſregard of every thing praiſe-worthy. Do not theſe teachings tend to render the divine word, diſpenſations and grace, inconſiſtent and contradictory to one another, and to the harmony of the divine attributes; as well as abhorrent to any idea we can form of the divine wiſdom and rectitude? But I return.

BY careful examination it might evidently appear, that events are not always effects of general laws, but that at leaſt ſome of them

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are really expreſſive of a divine, and ſpecial adminiſtration. Curſory obſervers may not be ſenſible of this; ſo few of the inſtances being explicit enough to ſatisfy ſuch perſons. And yet in this very particular, they are moſt agreeable to that divine wiſdom which would not too much interrupt our liberty. Which obſervations bring me to the following queſtion;

BY what rules the divine diſpoſer governs the moral world?

AND the general anſwer to this may be, That he does it in a manner ſuitable to the moral nature of mankind. Has he given man moral powers? Then ſurely he rules him in a moral manner, ſo far as thoſe powers reach. To ſuppoſe any thing different from this, would be to charge unerring rectitude with impropriety. The moſt evident appearances are, that he deals with mankind as rational beings, in a ſtate of trial and probation. Agreeable to this, if we duly contemplated the ſyſtem of man, with his relations to his Maker, it would naturally appear, and even prior to any perception of the fact, that there muſt be ſome ſort of correſpondent treatment, as by revealed will, and ſpecialties in providence. The nature of man, and the circumſtances he is placed in, abſolutely require it; and the wiſdom of the Deity appears concerned in it. But the mode is to treat theſe things with banter and ridicule; or to explain them away; or at beſt to give no ſolid reaſons againſt them.

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THE learned, and from them the unlearned, form to themſelves, what they eſteem honorary notions of the Deity. They judge of the divinity by themſelves; they find care, and extenſive employment, burdenſome; and eſteem attention to ſmall things ſervile. On the contrary, that it is great and noble to have their affairs carry'd on without their own attention and looking after. This they imagine God-like. They do not advert to it that inaction is unnatural to intelligences; and that continued, and eternal action, is eſſential to the Deity, the ſupream intelligence. From their own feelings, they imagine the Deity hath ſurely ſo diſpos'd the laws of nature, as to bring about all his deſigns without any ſpecialties, and pleaſe themſelves with their own concluſions. They indeed own there are ſome events which cannot be accounted for by the known laws, but they do not allow them to be ſpecialties, or interpoſitions. Inſtead of this they tell us, there are unknown laws by which they are effected: But they do not advert to it, what ſuch an imagination, if purſued through its conſequences, would run up into. I ſhall mention only one thought upon it.

SUPPOSE then there are ſuch unknown laws, Do we not hold that there are no confuſions, contradictions, or abſurdities in, or among, theſe laws, whether there be more or fewer, but a perfect harmony, as in the attributes of

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their divine author? Allowing this, how ſhall we reaſon about events which require laws contrary to the known ones, and ſubverſive of them; for ſuch inſtances might be given, but for ſome reaſons muſt be left to the reader's reflections to ſupply for himſelf. Such, whatever they be, muſt be reſolv'd into a ſupernatural agency, an agency that does not affect matter in the manner of the laws of nature; ſome power interpoſing in the natural courſe of things: And for which there is always ſome ſpecial and moral, not natural occaſion, but effected by an immediate will and agency, which it would be improper to term a law of nature, ſince it does not always have effect on the ſame occaſions, and in the ſame circumſtances. Let the matter be conſidered, without bias and prejudice, and it will appear that there is in ſpecialties no repugnancy to any of the natural laws, further than a temporary ſuſpenſion of their operations; or only a particular exertion of power; ~~having~~ leaving the natural laws directly after to take place.

CAN it imply any contradiction in the divine government, to admit ſuch additions to common providence? I confeſs, that as a divine moral government of the world requires it, I can form no idea of ſuch an adminiſtration without them: But on the contrary, that they appear moſt wiſe, and honorable to the divinity, and beneficial to the world. The

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ſhort queſtion is, Hath the Divinity never interpos'd? If it be allowed that he has once done ſo, the argument is or ought to be given up.

IT is difficult in this day of modern opinion to offer any thing in contradiction to the vogue. It is well known that there are who hold the notion of viſitations from the unſeen world, and of various kinds: as there are others who deny them. Without aſſerting or denying the thing, I ſhall offer a few thoughts upon the ſuppoſition of it.

THEY who hold the doctrine of ſpecialties, do it as the divine method of ſupplying events for anſwering the deſigns of infinite wiſdom: This is pious and well; but may there not be ſome remote and future uſes of them as well as the immediate intentions? for the preſent, ſuppoſing ſuch events, which by the way it would be unbecoming raſhly to deny, certainly the natural tendency would be to excite conſiderations of various kinds; particularly concerning an unſeen world; the agency of a ſupreme cauſe; the being and employment of intelligences, and a divine government; by theſe religious reflections would naturally ariſe in the mind. He that form'd us knew our weakneſs and need of mementos; and, however the preſent queſtion be determin'd, has certainly

order'd all things in infinite wiſdom. Our concern is not to injure ourſelves by miſtakes; but in this as in all things elſe, to think impartially, diſtinguiſhing well between the real, and the only apparent; and not be implicitly carry'd away by any vulgar apprehenſions on one ſide, or modiſh opinions on the other: In a word, to obſerve well, and judge accordingly.

MANKIND are creatures immers'd in ſenſe; every inſtance therefore of ſupernal power muſt, and will, if realiz'd, prove more or leſs a balance to their original ſenſitive propenſities, which naturally impel them to undue indulgences and gratifications; it would excite ideas of their dependent ſtate, and their obligations: Ideas of their being divinely obſerv'd by an all-ſeeing eye upon them for their good, if they conduct wiſely. It may be conſider'd whether they who endeavor to leſſen the credibility of interpoſitions in providence, and the other mention'd events, are friendly to the cauſe of religion and virtue, and duly cautious for the ſupports of revelation, the reality of which cannot be prov'd, without allowing an intercourſe between both worlds. Revelation was founded on miracle; and the continuance of any ſpecial agencies and viſitations from the unſeen world, may be ultimately deſign'd to prevent mankind's loſing

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all ſenſe of the reality of it as well as of religious obligation; agreeable to what has been before obſerv'd, and alſo to what we now ſee, that as theſe ſpecialties are denied, revelation is ſo too.

THE Deiſts may tell us that natural religion would remain without any aſſiſtances of theſe kinds, or any other. Suppoſe then it did ſo, what effect would it have? What in any caſe are the benefits of it without a practical ſenſe? alone it does not appear to be any ſufficient principle of virtue. It might be ſhown that it is only a foundation for a ſuperſtructure; and that it is no more than a meer capacity without this. That good breeding, an impreſs'd habit of right decorum, with a native common honeſty, are much more effectual to all the purpoſes of a good life than this; although it has been improv'd by its patrons, with all the helps they could obtain from revelation. Indeed the influence of the above imaginary qualifications of their natural religion have, by the Deiſts, been palm'd upon us as the effects of it, whereas their religion is no more than a mental ſenſe rendering the human ſpecies capable of receiving reveal'd religion; that as far as nature goes, it might take place in belief.

OPINION grounded on common providence alone, is far from anſwering the intentions plainly pointed out in the underſtanding, and moral powers of the human mind. On the contrary, the courſe of nature, and common providence, are, by themſelves, coincident with, and every way agreeable to, the doctrines of Neceſſity, and Materialiſm.

NATURAL religion is founded on what is obſevable in the courſe of nature, and material objects. It is indeed own'd that theſe imply an intelligent author of nature; but they do not enlighten us what buſineſs we have with this cauſe. We ſee that the laws of nature affect all creatures with good or evil, according as they do, or do not, attend to them: For inſtance, if they approach too near the fire, it burns them; if they immerge too long under water, it drowns; and ſo in a thouſand other miſtakes, they ſuffer for their errors. And it is chiefly in owning the wiſdom of the laws of creation, that natural religion conſiſts; and at beſt, on no better principle than weak opinion, all its obligations end.

IT follows as a corollary, that this natural ſenſe of dependence on, and obligation to heaven, this native diſpoſition to religious obſervance, is a proof of the deſign of the Maker, that man ſhould be a religious creature; that

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all, both good and bad, ſhould uſe their utmoſt care to regulate their lives, and moraliſe their minds, by every means in their power. All powers of the creature were given with wiſe deſign, and not one of them intended to be uſeleſs, altho' ſome of them were deſigned to be regulated by the natural underſtanding, moral ſenſe, and rules of life. But if this natural power of amendment is not to be uſed till it is ſuperceeded by a divine and ſpecial change of heart, it was given in vain; and to be as the S. S. phraſe is, wrapt in a napkin. We ſee, in the ſtory of the criminal alluded to, the condemnation of a ſervant who neglected the uſe of his powers becauſe they were ſmall, and with the pretence, perhaps a perſwaſion, of his lord's being a hard maſter: He would not employ them according to the intention of the giver. Was he then in a converted ſtate? certainly not; and yet his endeavours were required. To ſay no more, the notion is grounded on an erroneous piety, inadvertently exalting one of the divine attributes and diſpenſations, at the expence of the others. As to the reſt, the intelligent obſerver will eaſily ſee how it is founded, and with what faulty arts conducted and inculcated in the preſent day.

AFTER what has been ſaid of ſpecialties and interpoſitions, a Materialiſt may probably aſk ſome ſuch queſtion as this; if ſpecialties have

have ſuch a beneficial tendency, why did not the divine Being order them more frequently, and in a more determinate, and perſpicuous manner? This requires an anſwer, and accordingly a few lines upon it will not be amiſs.

ALL will allow, in words, at leaſt, that there is through every part of the divine works and diſpenſations, the utmoſt conſiſtency and agreement, no repugnancy or claſhing, and nothing contradictory, redundant or deficient to be found: Whereas, was the divine conduct altered, to what the Materialiſts in the queſtion requires, the caſe would be quite otherwiſe in the moral world. It would have deſtroy'd all Liberty, and ſubverted a ſtate of probation. Man would be neceſſitated contrary to the divine intention. Had the divine will been to ſecure an uninterrupted and uniform moral conduct, no doubt the inſtances of ſpecialties and interpoſitions would have been much more frequent, and explicit, together with immediate rewards of good, and puniſhment of ill deeds. The divine finger bar'd to mortal ſight had no queſtion aſtoniſh'd mankind into continued moral order, without any room for praiſe or blame. The event would have been the ſame as if he had impell'd mankind into right conduct, by effectual inſtinctive impreſſions, or mechanically diſpos'd them to religious obſervance, without any capacity to the contrary.

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But man then would not have been man. He would have been a cold unſpirited lump of abſurdity ; ſuch only as a Lucretian genius, or materializing projector could have had the credit of deviſing—No ! infinite wiſdom laid a nobler plan, in which the rational creature, by the uſe of moral powers, with Liberty, might approve himſelf to his maker in a ſuitable and determin'd degree ; with attention to whoſe laws, providential diſpenſations, and by the aſſiſtances provided for him, he ſhould obtain the happineſs his nature was made capable of. I ſay approve himſelf, in the uſe of the talents he has given him, for it would be preſumption to expect his maker ſhould do that for him which he has given him the powers to perform ; while yet in all beyond this, and what is requiſite for him, he may piouſly expect his gracious aſſiſtance.

I SHALL mention but one more of theſe proofs of liberty, viz. that of the notions we naturally form of the Deity. As ſoon as we are capable of conſideration, we perceive ourſelves conſtitutionally led to negative every idea that appears to imply imperfection; and to attribute to the divine Being whatever implies the higheſt degrees of excellency and perfection, with the moſt perfect harmony of the divine attributes. And upon ſevere examination of the matter, we find we were right

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in theſe ſentiments. Whereas when we enquire into the conſequences that ariſe from the doctrine of Neceſſity, we find them derogatory to them; particularly to thoſe of divine power, wiſdom, and goodneſs: Beſides that, it unavoidably makes the perfection of holineſs the author of ſin; while on the contrary, the doctrine of liberty ſhows the origin of moral evil to be a very different thing. Thus we alſo find we agree with the genuine ſenſe and meaning of S. S. I need only add, that our natural notions and common ſenſe, have more real weight and intrinſic worth, than our Neceſſitarians, and Semimaterialiſts, of which we have a great number, will admit. But we muſt take care to diſtinguiſh between what is truly common ſenſe, and the notions that ariſe from educated ignorance, and various miſleading cauſes, in the courſe of life; together with the bias of our corporeal affections.

I SHALL finiſh what I have to ſay on liberty, with ſome very ſhort obſervations on the divine fore-knowledge of events.

THE Neceſſitarians would have us believe, that unleſs every action of mankind were previouſly decreed, (i. e.) abſolutely determin'd, they could not be foreknown by the Deity. It remains therefore to examine this agreably to the foregoing theory, by which the contrary will be evident. BUT

BUT in order to make a right judgment concerning this weighty queſtion, we muſt be ſuitably prepared by a competent knowledge of the nature of man, particularly the operations of his mind; how far he is neceſſitated and how far free; according to, or in ſome ſuch manner as has been already expreſs'd. But eſpecially we muſt have right notions of the Deity; right ſo far as they go, for we cannot have adequate ones. We muſt allow the infinite difference between his manner of knowing, and that of mankind; of him who ſees the eſſence of matter, and all effects in their cauſes; to whom the paſt, the preſent, and the future, are ever before him in one perfect, and continued view. We muſt acknowledge the boundleſs immenſity of that wiſdom and power by which he made all Worlds; and that Omnipreſence by which he is every moment of duration preſent to them, to every part of them, and to all, even the minuteſt beings in them. Then if we add to this, the dependent nature of man, whoſe Liberty is no more than a capacity of paſſing occaſionally, from one neceſſitating motive to another, we ſhall be in ſome meaſure prepared to ſatisfy ourſelves in the preſent queſtion.

ADMITTING then the foregoing poſtulata, which I think will not be diſputed, we ſhall

perceive that as the Almighty ſees all effects in their cauſes, ſo all the cauſes and changes of Motive muſt be accordingly foreknown by him ; that he can foreſee whether the ſubject will conſider or not ; whether partially or impartially ; and in either caſe, what the event will be. For we may eaſily perceive, that he can as well foreſee what the mental eye of the mind in conſideration will diſcover, as what will appear to the bodily eye in the courſe of life ; and equally what the effect will be, (i.e.) how the rational creature will determine.

It is own'd, that the determinations of the mind are greatly influenced by the different characters of perſons. So that although they ſee the ſame thing, and under the ſame individual circumſtances, they will yet judge very differently ; but however perplexing this may be to mankind to determine what the party will do, it makes no difference with Omniſcience. He equally ſees their ſpecial peculiarities, as he does any ſimple object : their origin, nature, various complications, and ſpecial influences ; and in one ſelf-ſame view, what particular in the whole will determine them, and exactly how. So that he cannot need an abſolute decree to know what every one will do.

THIS ſhort account of the matter, may prove ſufficient for the impartial and contemplative, while the moſt clear and full rationale would be to no purpoſe for others. On this, and the foregoing way of thinking, it is evident, to me, that the Almighty could make a free agent; and that, man having liberty, his every action is yet foreknown. Such objection being remov'd, affords one more preſumption of the reality of liberty, as diſtinguiſhed from any abſolute ſelf-determining power; and upon the whole, that ſuch a power is not neceſſary to the idea of Moral Freedom.

The E N D.

E R R A T A.

PAGE 8. line 16. for *ſtrange*, read ſtrong.
29. for *perceive*, read purſue.

This short account of the nature and
proves sufficient for the impartial and cool
Reader, what the moft clear and full rational
would be to any impartial for others. On this,
and the following way of thinking, it is evi-
dent, that the Bible only could make a
free agent; and that, notwithstanding this
every reason is yet for doubting. Such objection
being refuted, affords one more presumption
of the reality of liberty, as diftinguifhed from
any adventure felf-determining power; and up-
on the whole, that fuch a power is not repug-
nant to the idea of Moral Freedom.

THE END.